

Growing Pains, 1800–1820

SUMMARY

The new capital faced many problems in its first years. It needed a more permanent form of government. After long debates over local representation and home rule, Washington received a charter giving it an elected council and a mayor appointed by the president. Later amendments to the charter expanded the city's self-government. Under Washington's first mayor, Robert Brent, the local administration tried to cope with many issues, including education, care for the poor, taxation, and finance.

The city also needed a variety of public improvements, which came very slowly. Several important federal buildings were completed, although the Capitol remained unfinished for many years. Federal installations at the Navy Yard, the Marine Barracks, and the Arsenal gave life to the southern part of the city. Canal building progressed slowly, with completion of the first canal around Great Falls in 1802. In 1810 construction began on the Washington City Canal. But these improvements hardly scratched the surface of a community where hundreds of miles of streets and avenues were neither laid out nor graded.

For Washington's modest but increasing population, life took on steady routines. People lived in neighborhoods near the centers of employment at the Navy Yard, on Capitol Hill, near the President's House, and elsewhere. A public market and new businesses appeared to serve the local residents and the members of Congress who were not permanent city dwellers. Professionals and craftspeople arrived to practice their trades. People of different economic classes came to the city and helped build it. A strong African American community took root despite obstacles, and the number living free of bondage increased.

The War of 1812 shattered the city's pattern of growth. The British army took the city with almost no resistance from the local population. The invaders burned the Capitol, the President's House, and other government buildings. Following the war, Washingtonians feared that the capital might be moved. Reacting to this possibility, local people worked vigorously to hold the government. They succeeded, and in the postwar era the city entered a new

Main Ideas in This Chapter

1. Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution gave Congress the power to govern the District of Columbia. There was great disagreement about the form this government should take.
2. Washington City received a charter that allowed for an elected council and a mayor appointed by the president.
3. The first mayor of Washington City was Robert Brent.
4. The city continued to grow slowly and neighborhoods developed around the President's House, the Capitol, and the Navy Yard. The canal around Great Falls was completed and the Washington City Canal was begun.
5. People of different economic classes, both white and black, came to the city.
6. The War of 1812 destroyed much of the federal construction of early Washington.

period of prosperity and orderly development. Unfinished federal buildings were completed, more public improvements were made, and Washington took on an air of permanence.

1. Forming the City Government

Debates About Local Affairs

- *What form of government did the federal city have in 1802?*
- *What problems faced the early city governments?*

Immediately after Congress arrived in Washington, it faced the problem of organizing a government for the city. The Residence Act of 1790 provided for three commissioners to govern temporarily. But what form should a permanent government take? Complicating the problem was the fact that the federal district consisted of five separate units: Washington City, Georgetown, and Washington County on the Maryland side of the Potomac River; and Alexandria and the County of Alexandria on the Virginia side of the river.

The Constitution, in Article 1, Section 8, gave Congress exclusive power over the federal district, but it did not specify how Congress was to govern. An early bill to form a local government in 1800 left all existing laws and government bodies in place and gave residents of Washington City no self-government. This plan was attacked by citizens as a violation of basic republican principles. A revised bill provided a territorial legislature and partial home rule. Citizens throughout the District of Columbia debated these issues in meetings. Early in 1801 Congress passed emergency legislation dividing the District into two counties, Washington and Alexandria. In Washington County, Maryland laws would apply, while in Alexandria County the laws of Virginia would apply. The president was to appoint officials to enforce the laws and administer the government.

In 1802 Congress returned to its debate about a territorial government for the federal district. Again this debate set off a series of public meetings and protests in Alexandria, Georgetown, and Washington City. District residents cried "taxation without representation" against the plan to create a local government without home rule. But the different parts of the District of Columbia could not agree on whose laws they wanted to obey. Some people proposed to solve the problem by returning land in the District to Maryland and Virginia.

Home Rule—With Limits

Amidst all this wrangling, citizens of Washington City petitioned in 1802 for their own **municipal** charter. Granted by Congress, this charter made Washington an **incorporated** city, much like Alexandria and Georgetown. This first city charter gave the city government power over some of its own affairs, or limited home rule. The voters, defined as white male property owners, received the right to elect a city council. The mayor, however, was to be appointed by the president, not elected by the voters. The council, with the mayor's approval, could make laws and levy a tax on real estate to pay for any city services it might provide. In the first election, only about 325 men were eligible to vote, but the turnout was nearly 90 percent.

More than 25 candidates received votes in the first at-large election. At least eight of the first council members were involved in local real estate development. Daniel Carroll owned the largest brick manufacturing operation in the area and operated quarries in Virginia. Of the other councilmen, one was a newspaper publisher, one a merchant, another an architect, and one, Augustus B. Woodward, a practicing attorney and a confidant of President Jefferson. A new charter in 1812 widened opportunities for home rule. The choice of mayor was put into the hands of an expanded 20-member council that was to be elected by voters in the city's four wards.

Life Under Mayor Brent

The city's first mayor, Robert Brent, was appointed by President Jefferson and served from 1802 until 1812. A brief look at some acts of the city council during his term gives a good idea of life in the city at that time. Several acts dealt with "opening, clearing and rendering passable" the city's rutted, stump-clogged streets. Licenses were issued to and fees collected from tavern-keepers (\$60 per year) and pawn brokers (\$100 per year), hawkers and peddlers (\$50 per year), firecracker sellers (\$50 per year), and **hackney** carriage drivers (\$10 per year). Lot owners who let water stand on their property for more than 24 hours were fined for creating a health hazard. The city was blessed with a number of springs and streams that met its immediate fresh water needs, but the council voted to spend money to build public pumps and wells and keep them in repair.

ISSUES OF SELF-GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL REPRESENTATION FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Since 1800, when the federal government moved to its permanent home, federal officials and local citizens have been debating two important issues: local control over local issues and representation in Congress.

Article 1, section 8 of the United States Constitution states:

Congress shall have power . . . to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such District as may . . . become the Seat of the Government of the United States.

The following excerpts are representative of the positions that were taken by congressmen on these issues around 1800 and again around 1803 when the issue of retrocession arose.

• Read each excerpt and decide which of the two issues it addressed. Then determine the position taken on the issue.

Mr. Nicholas: "I do not agree with my colleague in the construction he gives the Constitution. He is of the opinion that the powers given to Congress on this subject must be exercised by them. I think differently. These powers are like many others conferred, which may or may not be exercised. It had never been contended that we are obliged to carry into execution all the powers with which we are invested."

—*Annals of Congress*, 6C, p. 868, December 1800

Mr. Bird: "It was undoubtedly the intention of the framers of the Constitution that, after this Territory became the actual seat of Government, no authority but that of Congress should be in force."

—*Annals of Congress*, 6C, p. 870, December 1800

[Congress debated a bill that would have created a territorial government for the District. The people would elect the legislature, but the judges and the governor would be appointed by the President of the United States.]

Could it be the wish of the gentleman, he asked, to establish in the very heart of the United States, and immediately under the eye of the Government, such a principle as that these rulers should be independent and entirely above the control of the people?

He declared . . . as long as he ever should be in the House, he should constantly make it his duty to exert himself for the repeal of so bad a principle.

—*Annals of Congress*, 6C, p. 1000, February 1801

[Mr. Smilie spoke against the bill to create a territory because it did not provide for District residents to elect representatives to Congress. He said that the colonies had fought to be free of Britain over this very issue.]

Not a man in the District would be represented in the Government, whereas every man who contributed to the support of a Government ought to be represented in it, otherwise his natural rights were subverted, and he left not a citizen, but a subject."

—*Annals of Congress*, 6C, p. 997, February 1801

[Mr. Dennis thought local people would have influence on Congress just because they lived so close to the members.]

From their residence among the members of the general government, they knew, that though they might not be represented in the national body,

their voice would be heard. But if it should be necessary, the Constitution might be so altered as to give them a delegate to the General Legislature when their numbers should become sufficient."

—*Annals of Congress*, 6C, p. 998, February 1801

Mr. Eustis: "Suppose the militia of Maryland to be mutinous, and to surround these walls. Must you resort to Maryland for protection, and wait on her measures? No, the situation of the territory, and your immediate power over the militia must furnish you with the means of protection."

—*Annals of Congress*, 7C, 2S, p. 501, February 1803

Mr. Smilie: "He never could understand the reason for giving Congress an exclusive jurisdiction over ten miles square. There was no doubt that let Congress sit where they would, they would always have sufficient power to protect themselves."

Mr. Huger: "Though the citizens may not possess full political rights, they have a greater influence upon the measures of the Government than any equal number of citizens in any other part of the Union."

—*Annals of Congress*, 7C, 2S, p. 489, February 1803

Mr. Bacon: "Here the citizens would be governed by laws, in the making of which they have no voice—by laws not made with their own consent, but by the United States for them—by men who have not the interest in the laws made that legislators ought always to possess—by men also not acquainted with the minute and local interests of the place, coming, as they did, from distances of 500 to 1,000 miles. From these considerations, he inferred their incompetency to legislate for this District, whatever their disposition might be."

—*Annals of Congress*, 7C, 2S, p. 487, February 1803

Mr. Randolph: "... An idea had been held out from a very respectable quarter that this District might, in time, become a State. As to Congress, what difference will they find between being under the jurisdiction of the State of Columbia, or the State of Maryland? But if this objection were removed, it is impossible that this territory can become a State. The other States can never be brought to consent that two Senators and, at least, three electors of President, shall be chosen out of this small spot, and by a handful of men."

—*Annals of Congress*,
7C, 2S, p. 499, February 1803

The government of the territory of Columbia must be considered under two relations; first, as it respects the federal government; and second, as it regards its local concerns.

With regard to its connection with the federal government, two enquiries present themselves; first, whether it ought to be represented in the legislature of the United States, and if so, whether in one house only, or in both; and second, whether it ought to have a part in the election of the President and Vice-President of the United States.

It is contrary to the genius of our constitution, it is violating an original principle in republicanism, to deny that all who are governed by laws ought to participate in the formation of them.

The people of this territory therefore ought to be represented in the legislature of the United States; and to have a voice in the election of a President and Vice-President.

But shall they be represented in the House of Representatives only; or in the Senate also?

—*National Intelligencer*,
December 26, 1800

MAJOR BRENT'S STAMP OF APPROVAL



Robert Brent was the first mayor of Washington City. He held office from 1802 to 1812.

Following are descriptions of some of the acts of the city council that Mayor Robert Brent approved.

- Why do you think the city council enacted them?
- Modern acts of the D.C. city council are published in the D.C. Register. Do you think the concerns expressed below are different from or similar to modern concerns?

An ordinance approved October 6, 1802 was the establishment of the Centre Market on the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue, between Seventh and Ninth Streets, West. Section 5 of this Act could not be too rigidly enforced today: "That no person shall sell or expose for sale in said market any unsound, blown, or unwholesome meat or articles of provision under the penalty of five dollars for every offence."

An Act approved November 19, 1802: "That two hundred dollars be and hereby is appropriated for the purpose of opening, clearing and rendering

passable for wagons West Fourteenth, from North F Street."

An Act approved January 10, 1808, to provide for the prevention and extinction of fire: "That every proprietor of any dwelling house or store-house shall provide as many fire buckets of leather, as there are stories to such house."

Section 6 of Act approved January 10, 1803: "That there shall be procured by the Mayor one substantial fire engine to be kept near the Centre Market; and so soon thereafter as may be, two additional fire engines shall be procured to be kept near the east and west markets."

"An Act making appropriations for the repair of pumps and wells."

"An Act that every possessor of a lot whereupon there shall during the months of June, July, August and September be an artificial excavation, containing stagnant water more than twenty-four hours, shall fill up or drain the same, under a penalty of ten dollars, after notice as aforesaid."

April 10, 1807, the city corporation made regulations regarding the sweeping of chimneys. The chimneys were to be swept once in each three months from the 1st day of April to the 1st day of October, and once in each two months the rest of the year, between five and seven o'clock in the morning, or at such time as the chimney sweep and the householder could agree upon. The chimney sweep was entitled to receive from the person so contracting with him the sum of ten cents for each story of each flue or chimney swept; and if any chimney or flue should take fire from the presence of soot in the chimney within two months from the last sweeping, then the chimney sweep should pay a fine of \$5 and if any chimney should take fire that had not been swept, then the owner of the house should pay a fine of \$5.

—*Columbia Historical Society Records*,
vol. 2, 1899

The council also voted to employ four city constables, or police officers, to patrol the city. Fire fighting was the job of volunteer fire companies. The council required that every house or store owner "provide as many fire buckets of leather, as there are stories" to the building. In a city built chiefly of wood, fire was a disaster all feared and all fought.

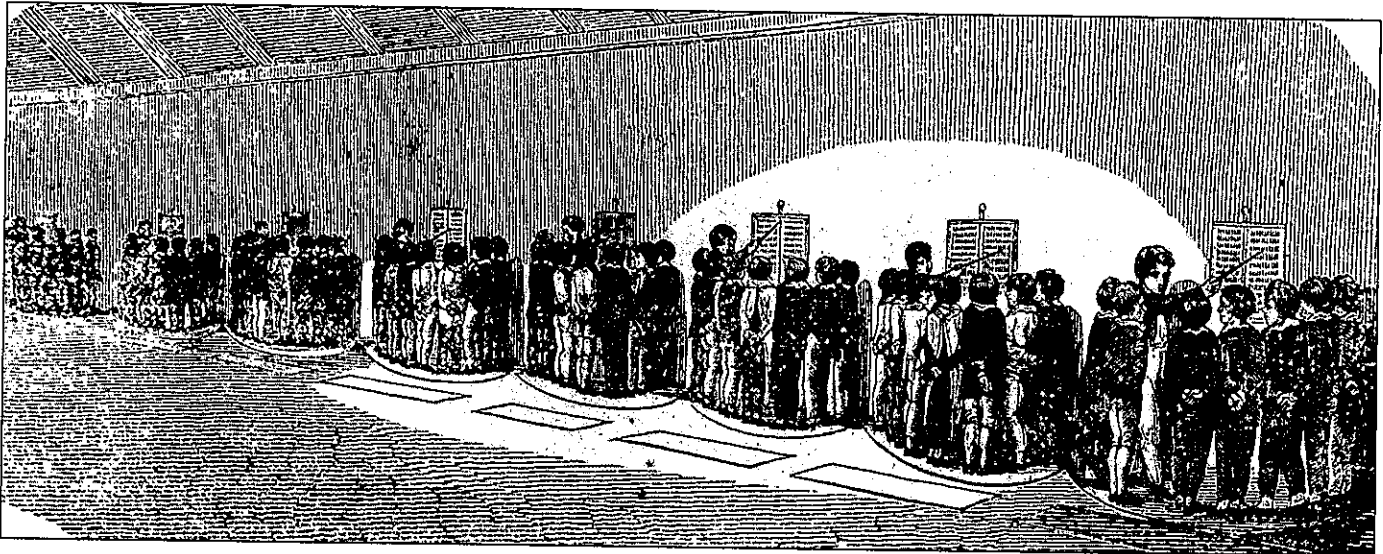
Relief for the poor was an unending problem. Many working men, attracted to the city to work on public construction, found themselves out of work and short of money when **appropriations** were delayed or denied. They suffered and so did their families. The city council spent more and more time and money helping the poor, giving them clothing and providing needy "resident families" with up to two dollars a week in aid. Single persons in distress were placed in private homes at city expense.

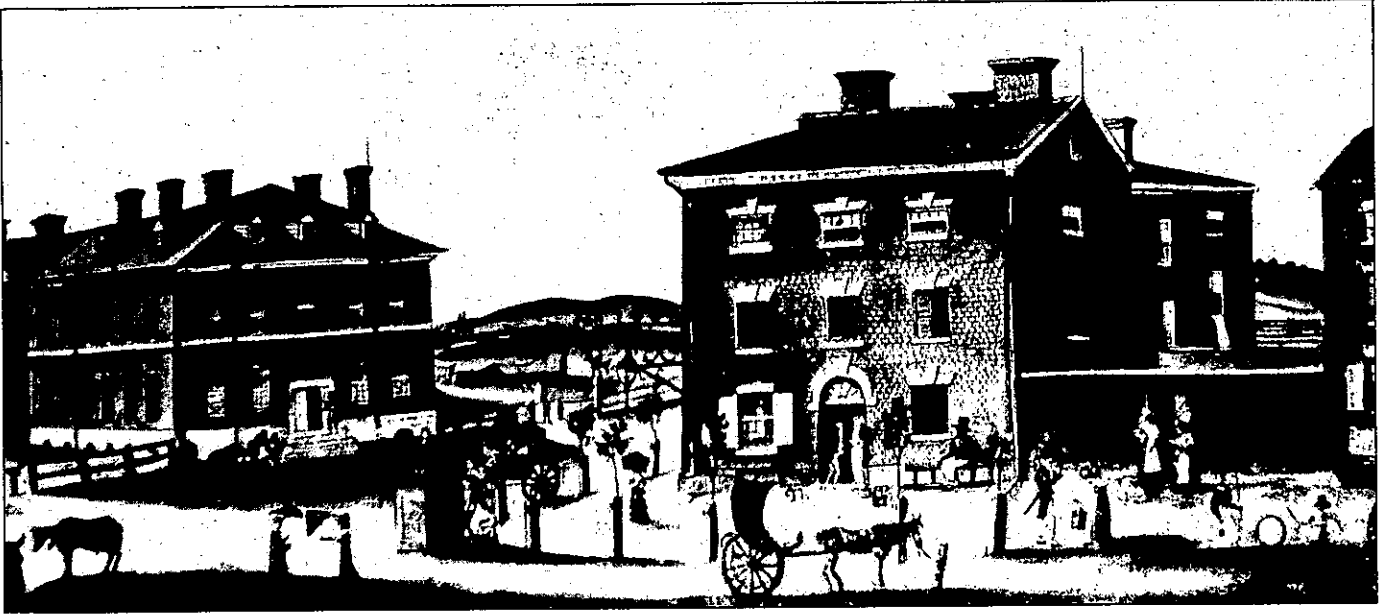
Education was not considered a government responsibility in most communities. Those children of school age who studied were taught by private tutors or attended private academies. Nevertheless, the city tried to offer a basic education to the children of poor white families. Two schools, built partly with public funds, opened in 1806. Pauper children received free instruction, while those who could afford it paid tuition. In addition to \$1,500 of city funds, the schools benefited from \$4,000 in donations from private citizens. When funding ran short, the schools were reorganized in 1812 to save money. In each school one teacher taught 100 or more students by using older students as assistant teachers. African American children were not admitted to the public schools.

The Lancaster School in Georgetown was in operation for 32 years. A teacher there was responsible for 100 or more children. Older children would teach younger ones. Keeping discipline was sometimes a problem, so the following was suggested:

Few punishments are so effectual as confinement after school hours. . . . It is often needful that the master . . . should confine himself in school, to keep them in order. This inconvenience may be avoided by tying them to the desks, or putting them in logs [so] that they cannot loose themselves.

—*Report of the trustees of the Lancaster School at Georgetown.*
(Washington: Joseph Milligan and William Cooper, 1812)





The city did not have the means to deal adequately with an urban community's needs. Thus, private citizens often joined together to provide services. The city's two "public" schools were run by and chiefly funded by the Permanent Institution for the Education of Youth, a group of volunteers. The three African American men, George Bell, Nicholas Franklin, and Moses Liverpool, who built the first small schoolhouse for black children in 1807, showed the same spirit of cooperation and self-reliance. Volunteer fire companies and passersby put out fires. Private charitable societies and churches gave aid to the poor and answered other needs.

2. The First Decade of City Life

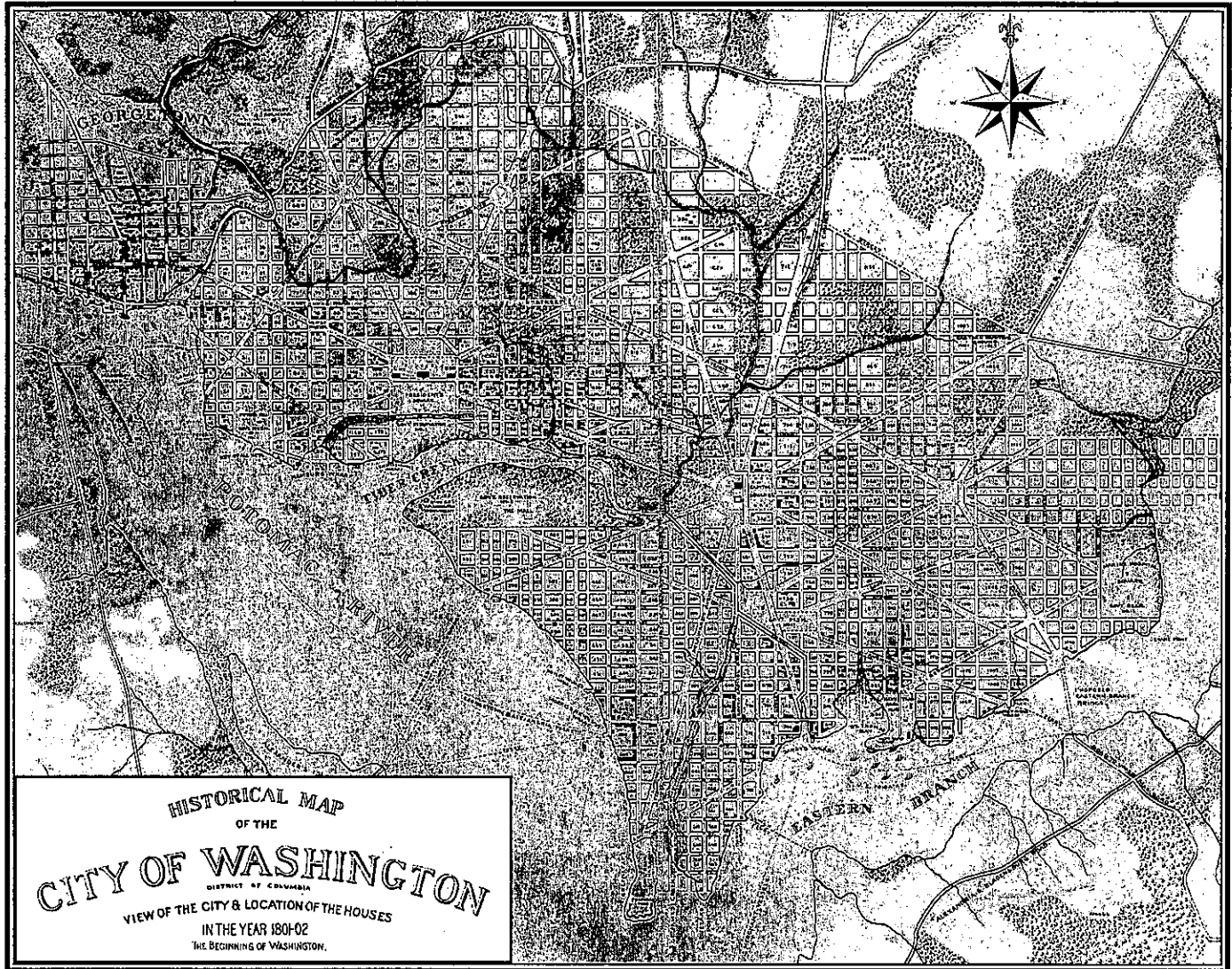
Federal Buildings

Federal improvements in the national capital served a number of purposes. While under construction they provided jobs for craftsmen and laborers. When finished they provided additional jobs for clerks, skilled and common laborers, and members of the armed forces. They also confirmed the city's identity and its sense of permanence.

Construction of federal buildings continued at a slow pace. The President's House, which soon became popularly known as the White House, gained two long wings on its east and west sides during Thomas Jefferson's presidency. Some portions of the interior remained unfinished, however. Jefferson appointed Benjamin Henry Latrobe, a gifted architect from England, as Surveyor of

The Rhodes Tavern on F Street at 15th Street, NW, was an important building in early Washington history. It underwent many changes over the years and became a point of contention between developers and preservationists in the early 1980s. Rhodes Tavern was demolished in 1984.

- *Do you think saving historical buildings is important?*



Washington in 1801–1803, drawn by Artemis Harmon in 1931. The small dark squares represent buildings; the fuzzy, dark dots represent trees.

- *Where was most of the building going on?*

Public Buildings in 1803. Latrobe shortly became involved in further construction of the Capitol, supervising completion of the south wing. This part of the Capitol, including a large chamber for the House of Representatives, was finished in stages between 1807 and 1812. Latrobe also supervised additional construction, repairs, and remodeling of the north, or Senate, wing.

Besides these key symbolic structures, simpler government office buildings and workshops were put up in the early years. Near the White House, offices for the executive departments of Treasury and War were completed in 1800. Between 1800 and 1806, in southeast Washington, the Navy Yard was built up with several workshops and other practical buildings. Near the Navy Yard, the Marine Barracks were authorized in 1801. The barracks' principal buildings were finished in 1806.

THE EARLY DAYS OF CHRISTIAN HINES

Christian Hines was born in Maryland in 1781. He came to Washington with his family in the 1790s. The following excerpt is from his biography, *Early Recollections of Washington City*, published in 1866.

• Trace Hines's journey to Greenleaf Point on a modern map of the District of Columbia.

My earliest recollections of Washington go as far back as 1796 or 1797. I then lived with my parents, at the junction of High and Market Streets, Georgetown. Some of our people, I recollect, went to see the President's House, which was then just rising above the basement story. My mother was one of the party, and I think three of her younger children and myself were with her. I remember she took us into Kleiber's bakehouse, and bought some cakes for us. This bakehouse, I think, stood a little northwest of the President's House, and was a small frame building intended for the accommodation of the workmen.

The next event that recalls itself to my mind was my journey to Greenleaf's Point. The buildings at the Point were just then going up, and quite a large number of mechanics were engaged in the erection of them. Mr. Joseph Green, who then kept a clothing store on High Street, Georgetown, thought this would be a suitable place to establish a clothing store for a young man, whom he had raised, named Robert Bryson. He accordingly rented a small frame house adjoining a brick one which then belonged to a Mr. Whalin, and commenced business quite near to the buildings then being erected. Finding it necessary that he should have a boy to assist him in the store, the consent of my parents was obtained for me to take the position. I then being about fourteen years of age. My duties were, to assist young Bryson about the store, as far as I was able at that tender age, by making fires, carrying water, sweeping the store, and sometimes by making coffee and tea (for he was a bachelor), and lastly, but not least, by going once or twice a week to Georgetown for

the purpose of carrying over a basket full or bundle of cooked provisions for us. This was the most important part I was to perform.

So I went down to Mr. Green, who lived in Mrs. Hiltzeimer's house, on High Street, Georgetown, and in a few days thereafter he took me down to the Point, so that I might become acquainted with the road I was to travel backwards and forwards for our eatables. In passing down the avenue, from Georgetown to the President's House, I recollect having seen but one house on Pennsylvania Avenue, (except the Six and Seven Buildings,) and that was an old frame house which stood on H, between Eighteenth and Nineteenth Streets west, near where Dr. Hagner now lives, and which was surrounded by a grove of beautiful forest trees. After passing the President's House, our road lay along F Street until we arrived at Eleventh Street west. We then passed in a southeasterly direction to a small creek that crossed E street north, near where Dr. Borrows now lives. We then continued along this stream, in the same direction, until it crossed the bridge. At that time there was not a single house on the avenue from the President's House to the Capitol.

We then passed through the woods, when a most beautiful sight presented itself to my view, such as I had never seen before. A vast plain of old fields extended southwardly almost as far as my eye could reach, and scarcely anything could be seen on either side but the old mansion, the Twenty Buildings, and a few old farm houses, and once in a while a few fruit trees that formerly belonged to farms. I judge there were not more than half-a-dozen houses, including the old mansion, until we reached the point, where I was properly installed in my new home and entered upon my duties. Thus, I became a resident of Washington at the early age of about fourteen years.

—Christian Hines, *Early Recollections of Washington City*
(Washington, 1866)

At another location, Greenleaf's Point at the far tip of southwest Washington, the first artillery battery was set up in 1794. In the early 1800s an arsenal was developed there for storage and distribution of military weapons and ammunition. Fort McNair and the National Defense University are located there today.

Canals

Canal building also took place in this decade. George Washington and other Virginia promoters had organized the Potomack Navigation Company in 1784 to improve trade on the Potomac River. In 1802, following years of construction, the company's major project, the Great Falls Canal, was finished and opened for traffic. This series of locks enabled boats to go around the treacherous falls of the Potomac River. Encouraged by this achievement, several local businessmen in 1802 chartered the Washington City Canal. Beginning at the mouth of the Tiber Creek on the Potomac, this canal would take a straight course along the Mall's north side (near the present route of Constitution Avenue), and turn in front of the Capitol. Flowing southeast where Canal Street, SW, now runs, it would then go south into the Eastern Branch. Not begun until 1810, the city canal was finished in 1815. Because of poor financing and cheap construction, the waterway never succeeded as its promoters hoped it would.

City Streets

Washington's most serious problem relating to improvements had to do with streets. Pierre L'Enfant had planned for avenues to be 160 feet wide and for streets to be at least 80 feet wide. Yet no funds were provided to develop these immense thoroughfares. Congress made an appropriation of \$3,000 to repair Pennsylvania Avenue in 1807 and supported Jefferson's plan to plant Lombardy poplar trees along it. The city spent sizable parts of its revenue on streets—nearly half in 1805–1806—yet it could do little to improve them. As a result of this neglect, Washington became notorious for its awful roadways. In dry weather clouds of dust choked pedestrians. In wet weather mud was inches thick and mud holes threatened passersby with grave danger.

Streets often remained simple paths hacked out of the underbrush. These conditions helped stimulate the formation of Washington's first neighborhood civic association. In 1801 the "F Street

Cheap Goods.

JOHN COX,

Opposite Mr. Senner's Tavern,
HAS this day received an additional supply of fashionable goods, added to his former supply makes his assortment large & handsome which he will sell by the piece or retail at a very reduced price for cash or produce.

AMONGST WHICH ARE,
A very elegant assortment of } of every
superfine cloths, & Cassimeres. } colour.

Second quality do.
Extra quality double milled drab do.
Second do do do do.
Coarse do do do do.
do mixed do do do.

Mixed & Drab Plains
Grey, blue, green & white Kerseys and
Half-Thicks

Blue, green & white negro Cotton
Drab, grey, blue & brown Coating
Swansdown waistcoating
Mole Skin do.

Marcellis do.
Striped and Rose Blankets
Red, white & yellow flannels
Thicksets, Velvets & Fanny Cords
Calicoes & Chintzes
Book Cambric & Jaconett Mullins
Lappet do.
Book & Jaconett mullin Handkerchiefs
India Jaconett do.

do Shawls
Camel Hair Shawls
Green, blue, brown, pink, straw, dove,
black & Fancy Silk Shawls
Black & Olive Silk Velvet
Handsome Thread Laces from 1 to 9 dol-
lars per yard

Black & white net Veils
Black, white & coloured long silk Gloves
White & coloured extra long do.
White & black habit do.
Long white Kid do.
do coloured cotton do.
do Mitts do.

An elegant assortment of Ribbons,
do Gown Silks
do Penlons
do Settings

Gold and Silver Zones
Muffs & Tippetts,
Dimities & Muslinetts
Durants & Jousu Spinning
Moreans, Camblettes, Wildboars
Bombazettes & Bombazettes
Ladies stuff & kid Shoes
Black, pink & yellow Flannels

Elastic glove ties
do with clasps
do Knee-Bands
Diaper and table cloths
Men's woolen, worked and beaver gloves,
do Beaver do lined with fur
Men & Women's cotton hose
do Lambs wool knit do
do Fullered do.
do Worsted do.
do Silk, White & Black do.

Gentlemen's fashionable beaver Hats
do Feather do.
do Wool do.
Floor & stair Carpetting
Oil Cloths

For Sale,

A TRACT of LAND in the Territory
of Columbia, late the estate and re-
sidence of Richard Queen, Deceased, con-
taining about 270 acres, and also ninety acres
adjoining, a part of another tract, will be
sold. These lands are about two miles from the
Capitol in the City of Washington, three
miles from Bladenburgh and five from George-
Town. The situation of these lands are
healthy and commodious and the soil equal to
any in the Neighbourhood, about 120 acres
in heavy timber, the rest cleared, about
ten acres in timothy and as much more mea-
dow may be readily made; the improvements,
a good dwelling House, a good Tobacco
House, and other necessary out houses and a
good apple orchard. Marham Queen re-
siding on the Premises will show the lands and
its limits.

Any person inclinable to purchase may
know the terms by applying to.

JOSEPH QUEEN.

Nov 14th 1800.

Notice.

BY order of the Orphan's court will be
sold at public vendue on Thursday the
11th of December next, at the plantation of
the late Josiah Hetten, deceased, on nine
months credit, the personal estate of the said
deceased, consisting of Negroes, Stock and
Household furniture.

MARY W. EDLIN, Admr's
EDWARD EDLIN, of T. Admr'
Prince George's County,
18th November 1800. } 2—

Francis Gantt & Co.

Have received and now offer for sale a large
and handsome assortment of

Fall & Winter Goods

AMONG WHICH ARE,
Superfine and second cloths,
Cassimeres, Swansdowns, milled drabs, and
Flannels.

Jerseys, Flannels, Half-thicks, Kendall cot-
ton,
Lace, and damask blankets,
Lacey Cords, Velvets and Thicksets,
Bombazet, Wildbores, and Durants,
Silk, cotton, washed and yarn hose,
sartier cardinals, Irish haines,
Quakers, Ticklenburgh and Dowls,
Buckskin and checks,
Holland, Tambooured, Book & Cambric Mu-
llins.

Calicoes and Chintzes.
Shawls and pocket Handkerchiefs,
Muffs and Dimity,
Gargh, Cassa, Mamuda, & Basts Mullins,
Hastick cloths and coatings,
Mens and womens coarse shoes,
Ladies Kid and Morocco do.
Do. with roses,

THEY HAVE ALSO ON HAND
Imperial }
Hyson }
Hyson Skin }
& Souchoong }
French and Spanish brandy,
4th proof Antigua rum,
Molasses, and Sugar,
Coffee, Pepper and Allspice,

30 Dollars Reward.

RAN from the ship RUSSEL, under
my command Stratten Conkling, born
in the state of New-York, 27 years of age, 5
feet, 9 inches high, dark complexion.

NICHOLAS BARTLET, born in the
state of Massachusetts, 20 years of age, 5 feet
8 inches high, dark complexion. Their cloth-
ing such as is common for seamen; I will
give the above reward to any person, deliver-
ing them on board the ship, in ten days from
the date hereof or 15 dollars for either of
them.

ROLAND GIBES.

George-town November 17, 1800.

City of Washington,

Commissioners' Office, Nov. 14, 1800.

IN order to give gentlemen from remote
parts in the Country an opportunity of
purchasing lots in the City of Washington,
notice is hereby given, that the sales which
commenced on the tenth instant at the Little
Hotel will be continued from day to day till
the whole are sold.

THOMAS MONROE.

Clerk. to the Commrs.

NOTICE.

THE Associate Presbytery of Pennsylva-
nia having appointed the following sup-
plies; there will be preaching at the Treas-
ury Hall in the City of Washington, morning
and afternoon, on the
4th and 5th Sabbath in Nov. by Mr. Smith
1st do. in Dec. by do.
2d 3d & 4th do. in do. by Mr. Young
1st and 2d do. in March by M. Walker
last do. in April by
1st do. in May by M. Balbridge.

WANTED

An Overseer

THAT is well acquainted with the cultivati-
on of Clover and the management of a
GRAZING FARM,

also a Gardener

That can be well recommended, and to hire
for the year six good hands.

ISAAC POLOCK.

13th Nov. 1800.

1—3W.

Washington Brewery.

THE subscriber from various causes be-
ing unable to carry on the Brewery to
any extent, offers to rent it for the ensuing
season, or he will give advantageous terms to
any person who will put in an adequate stock.
A few barrels of beer are still on hand, also
grains and yeast. CORN. CONINGHAM.

Nov. 15th 1800.

Two excellent Stills and a boiler for sale at
the Brewery.

Newspapers of the period tell us a great
deal about what life in Washington
City was like in the early days.

What clues can you find in these
advertisements from The Museum
Washington and Georgetown Daily
Advertiser of November 19, 1800?

Inhabitants and Proprietors Association" met at Rhodes City Tavern, located at 15th and F Streets, NW. The group hoped to persuade Congress to provide some regular federal funding for street and sidewalk improvements, but failing at this, they turned to their own resources. Several F Street residents paid from their personal funds to build sidewalks along the street.

Neighborhoods

- *Why did certain neighborhoods develop in the city?*

The L'Enfant plan for Washington encouraged scattered growth by distributing government functions in different parts of the city. As a result, the population tended to be located in widely separated neighborhoods. Each neighborhood centered around the location of a prominent government activity. Beginning on the Eastern Branch, the Navy Yard neighborhood gained early importance. Its inhabitants were not famous, but they had steady employment as manual workers in the Navy Yard's shops and repair facilities. The Navy Yard employed about 150 workers in 1806. Two years later its roster included 175 employees, and its daily expenses were reported as \$427.50. In 1820 about 380 men, including many skilled craftsmen, worked during a typical month. The Marine Barracks were part of the same neighborhood. To serve workers and their families, a small village grew up with churches, a market, taverns, and other small businesses.

Around the Capitol clustered another neighborhood, built to serve the Congress, its employees, and construction workers erecting the Capitol. A special feature of Capitol Hill was the boardinghouse. As temporary homes for members of Congress, boardinghouses provided sleeping rooms and regular meals for their inhabitants. Carroll Row, which stood on the site where the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress now stands, was one of the most fashionable and famous of these early boardinghouse rows. Capitol Hill also had several taverns and hotels to accommodate the visitors who came to the area during meetings of Congress. Small shops and service enterprises provided other necessities for congressmen.

The city center along Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and the White House became another early settled neighborhood. After the Avenue was made passable, it was built up in the early nineteenth century with rows of brick houses and commercial buildings. Typically, a building might have quarters for a small

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

Some of the people who came to Washington looking for work between 1790 and 1800 were disappointed. The following excerpt comes from a letter published in a book called *Look Before You Leap*.

• What were the young man's major complaints?

July 4, 1790

Honoured Parents,

Knowing the anxiety you will be under on my account, I take the earliest opportunity of writing, which is by the first ship that has sailed from Alexandria since my arrival. After spending a week in looking about me, and in viewing the country, and also endeavouring to get a situation, but finding none to suit me, I was obliged to proceed to this place, where I began to work the Monday week after landing, at the Capitol or House of Assembly, where the Congress are to meet as soon as this city is built. Provisions of all kinds are much dearer than in London; and the quality neither so nutritive nor palatable to an Englishman; for the greatest part of the animal food is salted, and the vegetables are so scarce, that we seldom taste any.

This country is far different from what we were taught to expect in England, and consequently I have been deceived in the expectations I formed on the descriptions which I had represented to me of this place. The City of Washington, which is to be the seat of the American legislature in the year 1800, at present does not contain forty brick houses, and these are not half finished; the remainder are wooden huts, and the worst I ever beheld. The five streets so pompously lain out on the map which we examined in London, are avenues cut through the woods, with not a solitary house standing in either of them.

The Federal City, as it is called, is situated upon an eminence, overlooking the Potomack river, and also surrounding hills and vales, but it is by no means so pleasant, fertile or healthy as represented. The hills are barren of everything but impenetrable woods; and the valleys are mere swamps producing nothing except myriads of toads and frogs (of enormous size) with other nauseous reptiles.

— *Look Before You Leap, or a Few hints to such artisans, mechanics, labourers, farmers and husbandmen, as are desirous of emigrating to America, being a genuine collection of letters from persons who have emigrated, particularly to the Federal City of Washington. London, 1796.*

business on the street floor and living rooms or apartments in the two or three floors above. Being the principal roadway between the Capitol and the White House, the Avenue became a center for merchants and the hotel trade. Hotels accommodated visitors who came to the District to do business with the government.

The neighborhood just north of the Avenue and east of the White House along F Street also became a desirable residential area. On a ridge, F Street was above the floods and swamps of lower Pennsylvania Avenue. Near the Treasury building lived cabinet officers and other high government officials. Georgetown, more than a mile to the west, was not so much a Washington neighborhood as a totally separate city.

Other new neighborhoods developed as additional centers of employment appeared. Early Washingtonians naturally wanted a city where they could walk to their jobs. This "walking city" was

important because an efficient system of public transportation did not exist. Strong neighborhood loyalties, as reflected in civic and citizens' associations, have continued in the city to the present day.

Builders of the City

- *What types of workers, craftsmen, and professionals were attracted to the new capital?*

A great variety of people and groups helped to build up early Washington. The city's builders came from many different origins, social backgrounds, and economic levels.

Day laborers, mechanics, and craftsmen who built Washington came from near and far. The majority came from nearby Virginia and Maryland, and although most were European Americans, a large minority were African Americans, slave and free. A number of the workers were from England, Scotland, and Ireland. Sculptors, who carved elaborate details in the Capitol building, came from Italy.

Many immigrants expected to make their fortunes in the new city, and they were paid well. Wages of three or four dollars a day for the more skilled workers were not uncommon. Those earnings were twice what could be earned in Great Britain, for example. But the costs of food, clothing, and shelter were also higher. Some found the hot, humid summer weather unbearable, or complained of not getting paid on time and being paid in goods rather than hard money.

Day laborers, strong men who did the digging, loading, and carrying, were often Irishmen. They lived in temporary dwellings or in unfinished buildings at Greenleaf's Point and other places where construction had stopped when a developer's money had run out. Like other "outsiders" in the community, they were victims of discrimination.

At another level, craftsmen found Washington to be a place of opportunity. Between 1791 and 1840, for example, approximately 110 master cabinet- and chair makers worked in Washington City and Georgetown. In 1813 many of these artisans were located on G Street near the Treasury Building. Other skilled workers such as printers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and brick masons found work and helped to build the city.

Professional men also came, in small numbers at first, to take advantage of the city's newness. As a place where opinions were formed, Washington naturally attracted newspaper publishers and

editors. The *National Intelligencer* began publication in 1800 under the editorship of Samuel Harrison Smith, a close friend of Jefferson. For years it was the city's best known newspaper. Other papers followed it, providing useful services such as advertising and "good press" for the city. A few other professionals—doctors, lawyers, ministers—came as the city grew. Several talented architects found employment, although they seldom prospered because of the slow rate of public construction.

Business enterprises of various sorts were attempted. Small-scale services, such as boardinghouses, were the most successful of these. In 1808 Mayor Brent and a group of investors founded the Columbia Manufacturing Company to manufacture "cotton, wool, hemp and flax." Located on Pennsylvania Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, this venture survived only a brief time.

In 1801 a group met at Rhodes Tavern to organize a public market to be built at 7th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. This market opened in December on a site planned for the purpose by L'Enfant. Known as "Marsh Market" because of the low marshy ground where it stood, Center Market soon grew into the city's biggest retail outlet for produce, meat, and groceries. Farmers from miles around could bring their products to sell at the market. One of the city's liveliest commercial centers developed in the area surrounding Center Market. Stores, stalls of all sorts, and places of entertainment moved into the neighborhood near 7th and Pennsylvania. Other commercial facilities—wharves and warehouses along the waterfront—were built to satisfy the city's need for manufactured goods and articles of commerce.

In Washington, building up the city was a slow process. It required the efforts and skills of diverse men, women, and children. They could witness the impact of their hard work within the city's first decade. The District of Columbia's population increased from 14,000 to 24,000 persons between 1800 and 1810. Of these new residents, half, or roughly 5,000, lived in Washington City. All in all, the first decade offered encouragement for the future.

3. Growth of the Free Black Population

The African American Presence

The capital had a large African American minority. Its territory had come from Virginia and Maryland, which together had about one-half the total number of the black people living in the United

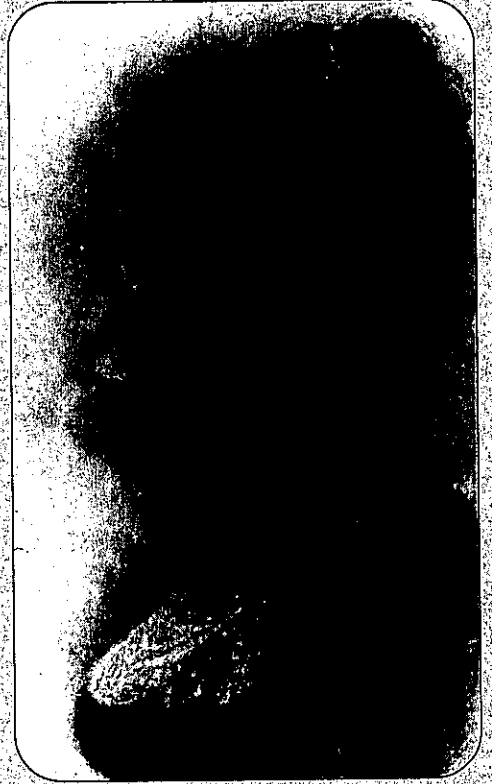
- Why did the free black population grow in Washington during this period?

ALETHIA BROWNING TANNER

Alethia Browning Tanner had one big aim in life—to make her people free. Born a slave, she purchased her own freedom in 1810. In 1826 she bought her older sister and five of her children—members of the Cook family. In all, Alethia Tanner helped to free at least eighteen people.

To raise the money for purchasing her family members, Alethia Tanner had to work very hard. She kept a vegetable garden and sold produce near the White House. President Thomas Jefferson probably bought vegetables from her. Like many free blacks in Washington, she saved money and acquired property. She also helped to educate her young Cook nephews.

Alethia Tanner's industry was important to Washington's free black community. One of the nephews she helped to free and educate, John F. Cook, became a leading teacher and minister. Cook later taught hundreds of black students. Tanner's accomplishments testified to the powerful yearning of slaves to be free.



States in 1790. Many of those in the District had lived on plantations in Virginia and Maryland before the city was founded. Nearly one-quarter of Washington City's population in 1800 was African American. Of the 746 black people in the city, 123, or more than 16 percent, were free.

The national capital had a large African American population for numerous reasons. Many slaves were brought here by local slaveowners who rented them to builders or to home and hotel owners in the city. A few owners allowed slaves to "work their own time," or earn freedom. Tobacco and wheat growing were seasonal, and some fields were worn out, so slaves could be spared from plantations in nearby Maryland and Virginia. A slave who worked his own time, sending a portion of his earnings to the master regularly and costing nothing for food, clothing, and shelter, produced income for the owner. The earned money left over could be used to purchase freedom. Interestingly, the free black population was growing much more rapidly than the slave population. Of all cities in the slave states, only in St. Louis, Baltimore, and Washington did free black people attain a majority in the African

American community before the Civil War. They outnumbered slaves in Washington by three to two in 1830, and by more than five to one by 1860.

Free African Americans were attracted to the new city by the promise of work and by the comparatively inexpensive living conditions. Washington had no laws requiring free black people to leave the District within a specified period of time, as was required in Maryland and Virginia. The laws of the new city, taken from the codes of Virginia and Maryland of 1800, established legal procedures whereby wrongfully enslaved persons could recover their freedom in the courts. Free black people in Virginia and Maryland lost this protection early in the 1800s, so when free men and women of color journeyed to Washington, they came to a relatively safer place.

The city's free black population was also increased by **manumission** and by the opportunities the city offered the slave who wished to appear free. Gaining freedom by will or deed of the master was sanctioned by the city's laws. Term slavery, the practice of setting a term of years to a slave's service, after which he or she might buy his or her freedom, also added men and women to the capital's free black population.

The Black Code

Despite the advantages they found in the capital, free black people also faced numerous hardships. **Discriminatory** laws and customs limited their opportunities for employment and learning. They could not vote in city elections. Most white people had a low regard for all African Americans, whether slave or free. Such prejudices were reflected in Washington's first black code, laws passed by the city council in 1808.

One aim of the new code was to protect the capital's profitable slave trade. With the end of legal African slave trading in 1808 and the increased number of unneeded slaves in Virginia and Maryland, many owners were eager to sell their slaves to cotton growers in the Deep South. Washington, D.C., became a slave trading center. City council members were aware, as one man advised President James Madison, that "the sight of gangs of Negroes, some in chains, on their way to a southern market" was disgusting to many American and foreign visitors to the city. But slaves were property, and the internal slave trade a lawful, if hateful, business **sanctioned** by the Constitution.

CASH FOR NEGROES.

We will pay the highest price for *any number* of likely Negroes, from 12 to 25 years of Age. *As we are at this time permanently settled in the market*, we can at all times be found at Mr. Isaac Beers' Tavern, a few doors below Lloyd's Tavern, opposite to the Centre Market, in Washington, D.C., or at Mr. McCandless's Tavern, Corner of Bridge and High street, Georgetown. Persons having servants to dispose of, will find it to their advantage to give us a call.

June 10.

BIRCH & JONES.

CASH FOR 100 NEGROES.

Including both sexes, from 12 to 25 years of age. Persons having likely servants to dispose of, will find it to their interest to give us a call, as we will give higher prices in cash than any other purchaser who is now in this city. We are at all times to be found at Mr. Isaac Beers' Tavern, a few doors below Lloyd's Tavern, opposite the Centre Market, Washington City. All communications promptly attended to.

Sept. 1, 1834.

BIRCH & JONES.

CASH FOR 400 NEGROES.

Including both sexes, from 12 to 25 years of age. Persons having likely servants to dispose of will find it to their interest to give us a call, as we will give higher prices, in cash, than any purchaser who is now, or may hereafter come into this market.

Alexandria, Sept. 1. FRANKLIN, ARMFIELD & CO.

These advertisements for slaves appeared in early Washington newspapers.

Mary Keogh } Manumission
 To } Recorded 17th June 1854
 Negro Hannah & others }
 Know all men by these presents, that I Mary Keogh of the City of Washington in the District of Columbia for divers good causes & considerations & in further consideration of one dollar to me in hand paid before the writing and delivery of this present, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged have manumitted & set free and by these presents do manumit & set free of and from all claims of service to me my heirs executors & administrators the following negroes to wit: Hannah aged forty years & her said children as follows: Thomas aged nineteen years, Lucy aged seventeen years, Maria aged fifteen years, Ben aged thirteen years, Laphy aged eight years, Peter aged six years & Frank aged four years. Which said manumission is to take effect as follows to wit: Hannah to be free at & from the date hereof in consideration of which she is to support her two youngest children till they are ten years of age, who are then to be bound out to good masters till twenty one after which they are to serve for four years for the use & benefit of such person or persons

of their said Mother, if she should then be alive and if she should be then dead, then for the use & benefit of such person or persons as I may by will or otherwise direct & appoint after which four years they are to be free and the remaining children are to be free the Boys at thirty years of age & the Girls at twenty five and if any of the said female negroes should have issue before the respective periods of their manumission as herein provided, then such issue is to serve till thirty if males & till twenty five years of age if females and then to be free and as also as to the issue of such issue forever and the labour & service of each of the said children as are able to work is to be applied to the support of such as cannot, and I do hereby declare the said negroes to be free at the several periods herein stated.

Witness my hand & seal this sixteenth day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred & twenty four.

Given Under & delivered } Mary Keogh
 in presence of }
 Walter Newton }
 William Pratt }

CITY OF WASHINGTON

I CERTIFY, That the hereunder

a bright Mulatto Woman 31 years old living in the first wards of said City

hath produced to me, satisfactory evidence of the legality of her title to freedom, pursuant to an act of the Corporation of the city of Washington, entitled "An act concerning free negroes, mulattoes and slaves," passed on the thirty first day of May in the year eighteen hundred and twenty seven. She is therefore permitted to reside in the said city of Washington, she complying with the provisions contained in the above recited act.

In TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of the Corporation of the said city of Washington, this 31st day of October Anno Domini one thousand eight hundred and twenty.

Register of the City of Washington.

Many of the members of Washington's large free black community had been freed or manumitted by their owners, and had legal manumission papers such as the document above. They were required by law to carry freedom papers, such as the certificate at left, at all times.

• What might happen to free African Americans if they were stopped on the street and did not have their papers?

The council was more concerned about keeping free black people and slaves apart than in ending the commerce in human beings. The mayor and council members, several of whom owned slaves, made it unlawful for any "Negro" or any "loose, idle, disorderly person" to be on the streets or at a meeting after ten o'clock at night. In 1812 the council ordered every free black person to register and always to carry a paper proving his or her freedom. In this way the council made it more difficult for runaway slaves to pass for free. This law also protected free black people from being snatched away and sold into slavery.

The African American Community

From these beginnings in Washington's first decade grew a deeply rooted black community. Men and women, slave and free, found economic opportunities in the new city. Black laborers, mechanics, carpenters, and masons helped build the Capitol and the Navy Yard. Many others found employment in the city's numerous service occupations as waiters, carters, hackney coach drivers, restaurateurs, barbers, bootblacks, tailors, gardeners, butchers, or servants. A number were skilled craftsmen who worked as shoemakers, sawyers, tinsmiths, and brickmakers. Other African Americans were fishermen, boat caulkers, ropemakers, sheepherders, and oyster vendors.

Black women were equally or even more in demand in numerous occupations. Women made up more than half of Washington's black population, and most of them worked. They held jobs as laundresses, seamstresses, maids, cooks, nurses, and carpet weavers. Some worked outdoors as vegetable gardeners, hucksters, beekeepers, and orchard tenders. A few women were heads of families, working long hours and raising their children as well.

It was from the expanding ranks of the city's free black population that the black community's leaders emerged in these early years. Families took root and established traditions that existed for generations. They were well aware of the strict limitations on their conduct. But they stretched these limits, sometimes to the breaking point. By seeking and seizing economic opportunities open to them in the young city, they built a base of self-support. On this base, using their own funds and skills, these men and women founded churches, schools, and social organizations. They helped prepare Washington's black community for the years that lay ahead.



YARROW MAMOUT

Yarrow Mamout was one of the few Muslims in early Washington. A free black man, he had been brought as a child from Africa into slavery. Purchased by a man in Georgetown, D.C., he worked so hard that his master freed him as a young man. Mamout secured a small cart and went into the hauling business. Successful in his trade, he earned enough money to make several investments. Twice his investments failed, but he saved more money. He became one of the first depositors in the Bank of Columbia. He also bought a house in Georgetown in 1800.

Although he lived among Christians for most of his life, Yarrow Mamout kept the Muslim faith he brought from Africa. He would not drink alcohol or eat pork. When he was a very old man, Mamout's portrait was painted by a Georgetown artist. The painter captured the unique appearance of this African who had become a successful American.

4. The War of 1812 and Its Impact

The Second War with Great Britain

- *How did Washingtonians react to the War of 1812?*
- *How did the war affect the city?*

Few Washingtonians expected the war that the United States declared against Great Britain in June 1812. Less than 30 years after concluding the War for Independence, the new nation and its former mother country were fighting again. The declaration of war climaxed years of tension between the two countries caused by disagreement over how freely the United States should be allowed to trade with Britain's enemies in time of war.

Washington's citizens thought this war a cause for celebration. Men bragged that the British would be whipped in no time, and those between the ages of 18 and 45 were formed into militia companies for the defense of the District of Columbia. Parading in dashing new uniforms was good fun, and companies paraded as often as they could. British raids up the Chesapeake Bay and the lower Potomac River threw a scare into the city in the spring of 1813, but they had little real effect on Washington. Life went on as usual in the capital.

The war seemed to improve business. Alexandria's export trade suffered from the British blockade, it was true. In Washington City, however, the Navy Yard was kept busy building and repairing ships. Local banks eagerly loaned money to people organizing a turnpike company and a waterworks. Two new banks were chartered: the Bank of the Metropolis in Washington and the Farmers and Mechanics Bank in Georgetown. Improvements were made in the city's **fortifications**. No less a figure than Secretary of War John Armstrong predicted that no enemy would attack the capital.

Everyone was shocked to learn in mid-August 1814 that 4,500 British troops had landed 35 miles south and east of Washington. The District's inexperienced militia took up positions east of town. Mayor James Black appealed for men to step forward and go to Bladensburg to dig **earthworks**. He asked free black men of the city to join in building these fortifications. Public officials and the population in general were in a state of panic. Officers at the Capitol packed precious documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and carted them away to safety. Men, women, and children fled westward out Pennsylvania Avenue to Georgetown and to the hills and farms beyond. At the White

House, Dolley Madison, wife of the president, packed crates of documents and had them sent away.

The people's fears were well founded. In the early afternoon of August 24th, the British troops reached the American line at Bladensburg. The fighting was over in just 30 minutes. Inexperienced American militiamen fell back, panicked, and ran for their lives. "The Bladensburg Races" is what people called the rout. Learning of the American defeat just before the British arrived in Washington, Dolley Madison rescued the White House portrait of George Washington by removing it from the frame and leaving it with two gentlemen. Then she fled the President's House.

The Burning of Washington

Following their victory at Bladensburg, the British moved into Washington City without encountering resistance. Michael Shiner, a young free black man, saw the army advance down Maryland Avenue toward the Capitol. He wrote in his diary:

We heard the tread of British army feat [sic], and as soon as we got sight of the British army raising that [Capitol] hill they look[ed] like flames of fire, all red coats and the stocks of their guns painted with red vermillion and the iron work shined like a Spanish dollar. . . .

Finding that all American troops had fled and that the city was virtually empty, the British commander, Admiral George Cockburn, began systematic destruction of federal buildings. The Capitol, White House, War Department and Treasury, the Navy Yard, and the Arsenal all went up in flames.

The only building to escape destruction was old Blodgett's Hotel, which housed the Post Office and Patent Office. According to tradition, it was saved only by the personal pleading of Dr. William Thornton, commissioner of patents. Thornton met the British and pointed out what a loss to civilization would occur if patent documents and models were destroyed. His personal bravery is credited with preserving the Patent Office. A story about Admiral Cockburn describes how he rode his horse into Rhodes Tavern, across from the Treasury, and demanded supper. As the meal was served, Cockburn put out the candles, preferring to dine by light from the burning White House and Treasury buildings.

The next day, after a thunderstorm had drowned the burning city in torrents of rain, the British marched away. It had been embarrassingly easy to destroy the capital of the United States.

THE BURNING OF WASHINGTON

• *The burning of Washington by the British on August 24, 1814, was a shock to the residents of the capital. Read the following excerpts, look at the pictures, and imagine what it was like in Washington on that fateful day. Write your own account of the day, either for your diary or for a newspaper in another city.*

Mary Ingle Campbell was born in Washington in 1801. The following are her first-hand remembrances for the Columbia Historical Society of the burning of Washington.

Being 11 years of age at the time of the War of 1812, her memory was very clear upon the stirring events of that time, and she recalled incidents of too little importance to have found their way into history, as well as others which are historical facts.

"I was sitting one day on the doorstep of my home on New Jersey avenue," she said, "before which stood the old-fashioned wooden pump of the neighborhood. The city was in the hands of the enemy. A British officer rode up with his orderly, and taking out a silver goblet called out: 'Here, orderly, bring me a drink of water in this goblet of old Jimmy Madison.' 'No, sir,' I said, 'that isn't President Madison's goblet, because my father and a whole lot of gentlemen have got all his silver and papers and things and gone.' But here a hand was firmly placed over my mouth, and a strong arm drew me within and closed the door.

"I well remember," she continued, "the terrific tornado which drove the enemy in haste to their ships, from which they were in dread of being cut off. First came the usual indications of an approaching storm, the low rumbling of distant thunder, and faint flashes of lightning, accompanied by fitful gusts of wind, swelling gradually into a continuous roar. The sky



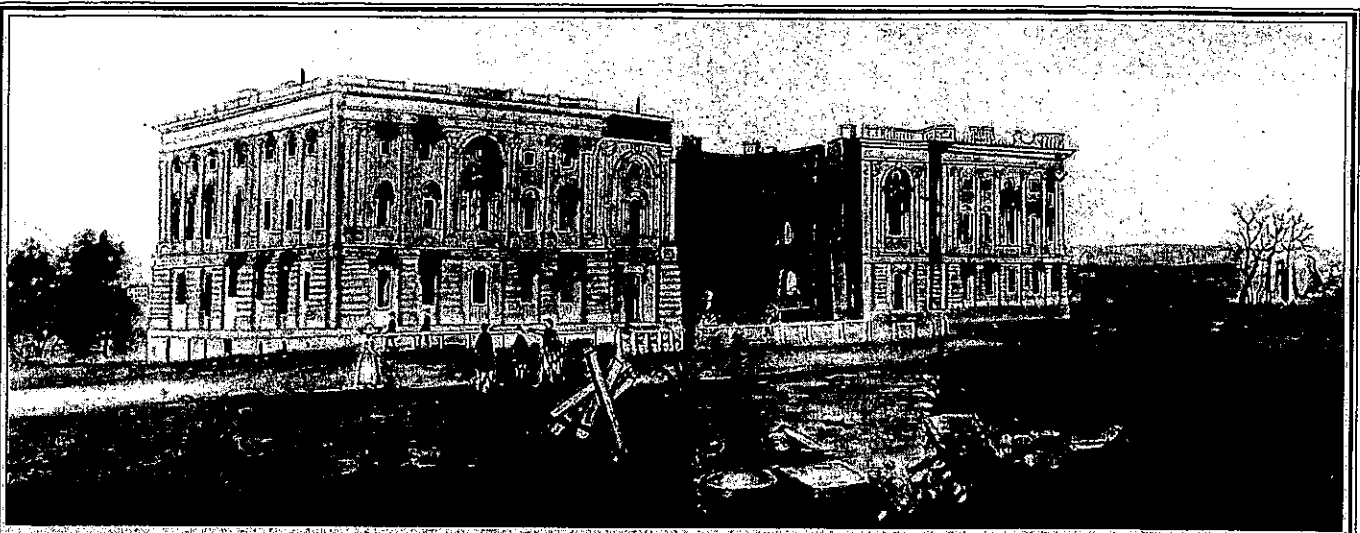
When the British reached Washington, they set themselves the task of destroying all the federal buildings in the city.

changed from the peculiar leaden hue portending a wind storm, into almost midnight blackness. Then came the crash and glare of incessant thunder and lightning, and the wild beating of the rain, mingled with the sound of roofs tearing from their supports, and the whirl of heavy bodies flying through the air and falling upon the ground beneath. Now and then, by the lightning flash, could be seen a feather bed and other lighter articles borne upon the wings of the wind from the upper apartments of the unroofed buildings. Suddenly, in the midst of this wild scene of terror, came the sound of an explosion, from the direction of the Arsenal, and our hearts stood still, lest it should mean deadly conflict between the enemy and our dear ones, for fathers and brothers were all with the militia. At last, however, with great sighs and sobs, as though weary with a well-performed duty, the storm slowly died away, the thunder growling in retreating to its hiding-place behind the hills, while quickly, as from an ambush, burst forth the evening sun, with the joy of a conqueror, though gazing only upon a battle-field of woe! With the passing of the storm came the hurried tramp of the foreign foe, hastening to escape to their vessels, lest they should be hemmed in and captured, but pausing to light their way by firing such of the public buildings as they had not yet been able to reach. Then a new excitement arose, every man rushed to aid in subduing the flames, which, thanks to the heavy rain which had fallen, were kept from spreading over the entire city.

"Hearing the tramp of the retreating foe, one of the ladies of our household stepped to the door and there encountered a group of British officers taking a last drink from the old pump. 'Great God, Madam!' said Admiral Cockburn, 'is this kind of storm to which you are accustomed in this infernal country?' 'No sir,' was the reply, 'this is a special interposition of Providence to drive our enemies from our city.' 'Not so, Madam,' he answered, 'it is rather to aid them in the destruction of your city.' With this parting shot the 'Red Coats' galloped off and disappeared forever from the Nation's Capital."

On Wednesday, August 25, Dolley Madison, the president's wife, wrote the following about her experiences.

Will you believe it, my sister? We have had a battle or skirmish near Bladensburg, and I am still here, within sound of the cannon! Mr. Madison comes not, may God protect him! Two messengers covered with dust



One of the buildings that was destroyed was the Capitol. Entering the building, Admiral Cockburn's men piled furniture into a great heap and made a large bonfire.

come to bid me fly, but I wait for him. At this late hour a wagon has been procured, I have had it filled with the plate [silver] and most valuable portable articles belonging to the house; whether it will reach its destination, the Bank of Maryland, or fall into the hands of the British soldiery, events must determine. Our kind friend, Mr. Carroll, has come to hasten my departure, and is in a very bad humour with me because I insist on waiting until the large picture of General Washington is secured, and it requires to be unscrewed from the wall. This process was found too tedious for these perilous moments; I have ordered the frame to be broken, and the canvas taken out; it is done, and the precious portrait placed in the hands of two gentlemen from New York for safe keeping.

And now, dear sister, I must leave this house, or the retreating army will make me a prisoner in it, by filling up the road I am directed to take. When I shall see or write you, or where I shall be tomorrow, I cannot tell!

Margaret Bayard Smith, wife of the owner of the National Intelligencer, attended a tea at which the burning of the White House was described. She wrote about the experience in a book entitled The First Forty Years of Washington Society, published in 1906.

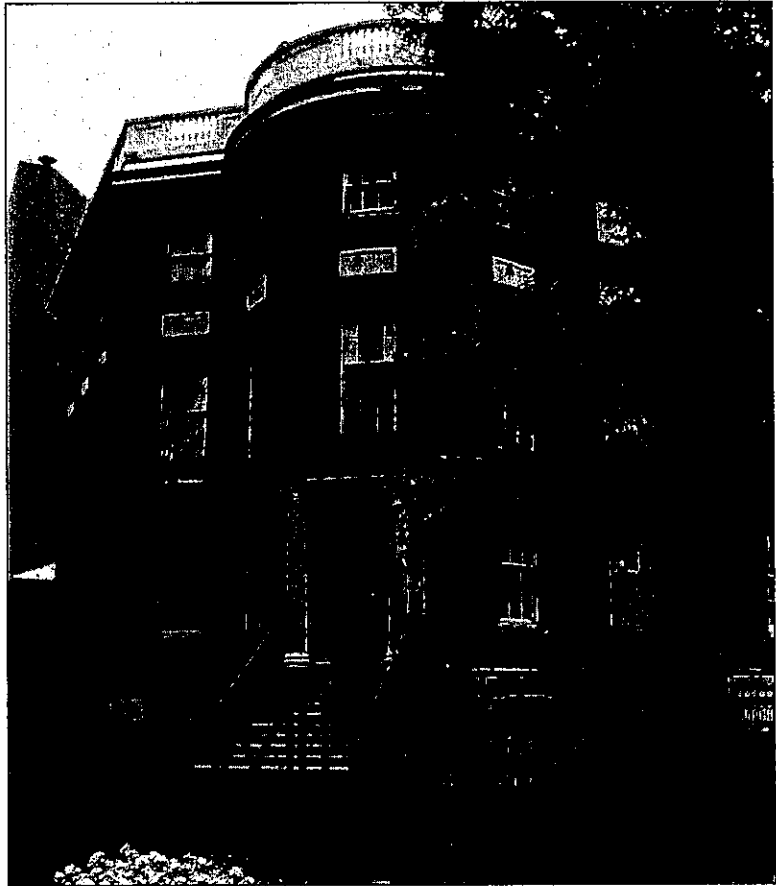
We drank tea at Mrs. Thornton's, who described to us the manner in which they conflagrated the President's House and other buildings:—50 men, sailors and marines, were marched by an officer, silently thro' the avenue, each carrying a long pole to which was fixed a ball about the circumference of a large plate,—when arrived at the building, each man was station'd at a window, with his pole and machine of wild-fire against

it, at the word of command, at the same instant the windows were broken and this wild-fire thrown in, so that an instantaneous conflagration took place and the whole building was wrapt in flames and smoke. The spectators stood in awful silence, the city was light and the heavens reddened with the blaze!

When he went to burn Mr. Gale's office, whom he called his "dear Josey", Mrs. Brush, Mrs. Stelle and a few citizens remonstrated with him, assuring him that it would occasion the loss of all the buildings in the row. "Well," said he, "good people I do not wish to injure you, but I am really afraid my friend Josey will be affronted with me, if after burning Jemmy's palace, I do not pay him the same compliment,—so my lads, take your axes, pull down the house, and burn the papers in the street." This was accordingly done. He told Mrs. Brush and several others, that no houses should be injur'd but such as were shut and deserted. Mr. Cutting and Mrs. B saved ours, by opening the windows. Cockburn often rode down the avenue, on an old white mare with a long main [sic] and tail and followed by his fold to the dismay of the spectators. He, and all his officers and soldiers were perfectly polite to the citizens. He bade them complain of any soldier that committed the least disorder and had several severely punished, for very slight offenses. All provisions were paid for. He stop'd at a door, at which a young lady was standing and enter'd into familiar conversation. "Now did you expect to see me such a clever fellow," said he, "were you not prepared to see a savage, a ferocious creature, such as Josey represented me? But you see I am quite harmless, don't be afraid, I will take better care of you than Jemmy did!" Such was his manner—that of a common sailor, not of a dignified commander.

The Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812, was signed at the Octagon, a house built between 1799 and 1801 by John Tayloe. Today the Octagon is a museum.

- *Research the history of the Octagon and Rhodes Tavern and contrast what happened to these two significant Washington buildings over the years.*
- *How do you feel about historic preservation?*



Washington had experienced its deepest humiliation. Citizens of the national capital wondered what it meant for themselves and for Washington City. Some may have gained a deeper understanding of the capital's meaning as the governmental and symbolic center of the nation. Others worried about the burned city's immediate future. Margaret Bayard Smith, wife of the *National Intelligencer's* owner, wrote, "I do not suppose Government will ever return to Washington."

Up from the Ashes

Washingtonians who straggled back into the city in 1814 found it a smoldering ruin. Although homes and shops of the citizens had not been much damaged, the city's federal core had been destroyed by fire. People blamed the generals and political leaders who had provided such poor leadership. On the fire-scorched walls of the Capitol appeared such writings as "Curse Cowards!" and "James Madison is a rascal, a coward, and a fool."

What happened next was little short of remarkable. A special session of Congress was called to meet in the fall of 1814. The chief problem faced was whether or not to keep the capital in Washington. Gathered in a cramped room at the Patent Office—the only place available—Congress argued the future of Washington. After a long and anxious debate, led by Virginia and Maryland, Congress voted to retain the capital in Washington, D.C. The deciding factor was probably the promise of a \$500,000 loan from Washington banks to aid the government in rebuilding the White House, Capitol, and Navy Yard. On February 4, 1815, the day after Congress had voted to stay in Washington, news was received of General Andrew Jackson's victory over the British at New Orleans. A peace treaty with the British was signed three weeks later by President Madison at the Octagon at 18th Street and New York Avenue, N.W. The threat of removal of the capital from Washington was once again over.

The rebuilding of the federal city took place rapidly. A temporary structure known as the "Brick Capitol," was built by a private stock company for \$25,000. It was rushed to completion in December 1815 and remained home to Congress for four years. Benjamin Latrobe was again assigned to supervise construction at the Capitol. He carried it out with great artistry. The rebuilt structure, when completely finished, was again occupied by Congress. The White House was redesigned by James Hoban, the architect, while President James Madison and wife Dolley lived in the Octagon, not far away. In 1818, Madison's successor, James Monroe, opened the renovated White House to the public.

The city experienced a surge of prosperity while it was rebuilding. The Washington Canal, originally planned by L'Enfant in 1791, was completed in 1815, connecting the Potomac River and the Eastern Branch of the Tiber Creek. Three new banks opened the following year. Real estate prices advanced. Businesses were booming, and people had work and money. The city of Washington was doomed had been happily so. The city's future, after disappointment and disaster, was bright.

FOR REVIEW

1. Make a list of the problems that faced Mayor Robert Brent when he took office. Below the list write a brief essay on whether or not these are still problems for Washington's mayors.
2. On a map of Washington locate these early neighborhoods: the Navy Yard, Capitol Hill, the center city around Pennsylvania Avenue. Explain why these neighborhoods grew up in these areas.
3. Write a brief paragraph describing why life in the new capital was attractive to black people.
4. Explain the so-called black codes and give at least two specific examples of rules that were passed by the mayor and city council.
5. What were the results of the British attack on Washington during the War of 1812? Explain why the British chose to attack Washington.

BE CREATIVE

Pretend that you are one of the laborers who worked on the building of the Capitol. Write a letter to your family telling them what life in the city is like.

OR

Write a brief play in which the three commissioners have a meeting to discuss the problems of starting a new city. Each commissioner must offer some solutions.

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